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PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL

SERMONS

ON

CONFIRMATION;

AND

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AFTER ADMINISTERING THAT HOLY AND APOSTOLIC RITE.

BY THE LATE
RIGHT REV. THEODORE DEHON, D. D.
Bishop of the Diocess of South-Carolina.

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BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the third day of March, Anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and eighteen, in the forty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America, "*The Protestant Episcopal Society for the Advancement of Christianity in South Carolina,*" deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof they claim, in the words following, to wit:

"Sermons on Confirmation; and an Address delivered after administering that Holy and Apostolic Rite. By the late Right Rev. Theodore Dehon, D. D. Bishop of the Diocess of South-Carolina. Published for the benefit of the Protestant Episcopal Society for the Advancement of Christianity in South-Carolina."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also an act, entitled "An act, supplementary to an act, entitled an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES JERVEY,
District Clerk of S. C. D.

ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME time before the much lamented death of Bishop DEHON, that Prelate expressed to the Board of Trustees his intention of giving the following Discourses to the *Protestant Episcopal Society for the Advancement of Christianity in South Carolina*, to be published in aid of the funds of that Institution. This kind intention has since been fulfilled by his afflicted widow.

The Right Rev. Author intended to have revised and prepared these Discourses for the press; but the hand of death unexpectedly arrested this design. As the Board of Trustees are not sufficiently acquainted with the late Prelate's views on this subject, to venture upon any alteration, they are published as

they were delivered by the author. In presenting them, however, to the public, but more especially to the members of the *Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocess of South Carolina*, the Board feel an assurance that they will be read with delight; and, by the blessing of God, be productive of good.

SERMON I.

HEBREWS vi. 2.

The doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands.

IN nothing has our heavenly Father more affectingly commended his love to us, than in his care *to assure* us of it. The whole Christian economy is calculated to *manifest* to the children of men, the solicitude of their Creator for their happiness and salvation. The mission of his Son to instruct them and die for them; the institution of a Church, in which they may be brought near to him, and nurtured as his children by adoption; the waters of baptism, in which they may be washed from their sins and their fears; the banquet of his holy table, at which they may feast upon *tokens* of forgiveness and *pledges* of eternal life; the accommodation of his gracious promises to the capacity, yea, to the weakness of our nature, are so many *demonstrations* of his care to beget in us a confidence in his goodness,

and to fill us thereby with love, and peace, and joy. This is signally true with respect to the rite of Confirmation—a rite in which the Deity, as it were, takes his adopted children by the hand, to put them in possession of the estate which he had purchased for them with his blood, and in the contemplation of which, we may take from the *body* the beautiful apostrophe with which its wonderful *formation* inspired the Psalmist, and apply it to the *soul;* "thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."

The rite of Confirmation is held by our Church, as it is also represented by St. Paul in the text and context, to be a first principle of the doctrine of Christ. For the due administration of it, she has provided a very instructive and solemn office, and enjoined it upon the officers to whom the administration of it belongs, to endeavour that all her children have opportunity to receive it. It is made my duty, beloved brethren, as your parish minister, to bring this rite to your consideration; and, in another relation to you, to afford you, at a convenient time, occasion to partake of its benefits. Pur-

posing soon, with God's permission, to discharge this latter obligation, I would, as preparatory thereto, endeavour to discharge the former, by setting before you what I think will comprise all you may be anxious to know upon the subject; the antiquity and authority of it, its import, and the propriety and utility of it; attempting to obviate such objections, and such only, as may seem to have any foundation, or to be of any weight.

The import of this ordinance is the point of greatest consequence. But to have you more seriously interested in it, its antiquity is first named. Were it a novelty sprung up in this age of innovation, it would be less worthy of your consideration; for concerning doctrines, or precepts, or rites, it will, in all cases, hold good, that, wanting age, they want that which is now *essential* to the foundation, or first principles of the Christian religion. But when this rite is shown to be ancient as the Apostles' days, and to have been observed in the Church in every age since, it will present itself to you in its proper venerable form, pointing to *inspiration* for its *origin*, and adducing *time* as its *advocate*.

"Laying on of hands" was a ceremony used on *divers* occasions in the first years of Christianity. Upon the sick, the Apostles laid their hands when they would recover them. In the ordination of any one to either of the three orders of the ministry, imposition of hands was used. And sometimes in simple benediction, or in sending out Evangelists upon their work, recourse was had to this ancient and significant ceremony. But "laying on of hands" is mentioned in the text with "baptism," and faith, and three other things as fundamentals; that is, as elementary principles in the Christian life. Now in the elements, or first principles of any scheme of religion, all who would be proficients therein, are interested. But the "laying on of hands" in ordinations, or in benedictions, or in healing the sick, concerned but a few, and those exclusively. There must, therefore, have been some occasion of using this rite, in which all Christians partook of it. Let us see if we can find, in the sacred record, mention of any such occasion. It is stated in the eighth chapter of the Acts, that Philip, one of the first Deacons, preached the Gospel to the

Samaritans, and baptized those by whom it was embraced. The Apostles were then remaining at Jerusalem. When they "heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." We read, moreover, in the nineteenth chapter of the same book, that when Paul, having journeyed through the upper coasts of Asia, came to Ephesus, he found there certain disciples who had been baptized into John's baptism, and who told him, upon his asking them whether they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed, that they had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost. The great Apostle preached unto them Jesus, in whose name they were presently baptized. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them." These acts are mentioned as if they were done of course, in conformity with a usage of the Apostles,

for signifying and conveying to the recipients their interest in that gift which Christ had purchased, and having ascended up on high, had received, for men, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here, then, is a proper confirmation; and the question arises, whether all Christians partook of this rite? From the nature of the thing, and the testimony and usages of the Fathers of the first centuries, it is reasonable to infer that they did. Of the gift of the Spirit, which it signified, they all had need; being all heirs of that infirmity and corruption which unfitted them to do, or to think, that which was good, without the help of God. It was declared to be prepared for them all. "Repent, and be baptized," said St. Peter to the multitude, "and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Of the graces and comforts which are the fruits of the Spirit, our blessed Lord prayed that not only his chosen disciples should partake, but all who, through their word, should believe on his name. And there are facts which evidence that, of the thing signified

by Confirmation, all Christians did participate. The Apostles, in writing to them assert, that they had received the Spirit; and the unity and strength, the patience and perseverance which they had collectively, and the peace, and love, and joy, which pervaded their bosoms individually, cannot, consistently with Christian doctrine, be attributed to any other source. As, therefore, all needed and received the thing signified, and must equally have needed to be assured of their interest in it by the sign, it is probable they all obtained it after the same manner in which it was conveyed in the particular cases which are recorded, viz. by laying on of the Apostles' hands. These holy men, who were the first Bishops of the Church, as far superior in holiness as in zeal, to all who have succeeded them, journeyed continually from place to place, planting and "confirming the Churches." The gifts and graces of the Spirit appear to have abounded in those Churches which they personally visited. And when St. Paul expresses his affectionate wish to visit the Christians at Rome, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift, it is difficult to conceive, un-

less he would do it by some bodily act, why the gift might not have been communicated by message or by letter. It should seem, then, that that was done generally to all Christians which was done to the Samaritan converts; they received from the proper minister, when they had been baptized, an imposition of hands, to signify and convey to them their strength and comfort in the Holy Ghost. Without this supposition it will be impossible to find in the Sacred Volume any trace of a laying on of hands, such as the text, and the words connected with it describe; for unless it were participated by all Christians, it could not sustain the character of a foundation or first principle of the doctrine of Christ: and what other laying on of hands is mentioned in the Gospel which could have been so participated? The fathers of the earliest centuries, who, living near the Apostles' times, are most likely to have known the practice of the first Christians, confirm this opinion. In their day the ceremony of laying on of hands was applied to all Christians after their baptism; and they declare this use of it to be derived from the usage of the Apostles. Do

you ask, says St. Jerome, where it is written? It is written in the Acts of the Apostles. Indeed, it is not easy to conceive how a rite should, at so early a period, have been so universally received, if it had not come to those who received it with the authority of an apostolic institution. Confirmation, then, was the "laying on of hands," of which all partook after the reception of baptism; and the only use of this ceremony, which could be styled an element of the Christian economy, and, consequently, that alluded to in the text; where we find it having St. Paul's reverence and support, and placed on the same ground, in the same rank with repentance, and faith, and baptism, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. This has been the most ancient and general exposition of this celebrated passage of the Sacred Writings. The learned Grotius could find no other satisfactory explanation of it; and the reforming Calvin, in his commentary upon the passage, confesses that this one place evidently shows that Confirmation was instituted by the Apostles.

The only difficulty in this part of the sub-

ject arises out of the supposition, that the "laying on of hands," in the apostolic age, was for the communication of the *miraculous* powers which had been received from the Holy Ghost. It is certainly true, that by imposition of the Apostles' hands were conveyed to others those supernatural powers with which the Apostles were endowed by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And this was an operation of the Comforter, adapted to the exigencies of the Christians at that particular juncture; a surprising attestation to the truth of the Gospel, without which it probably would not so successfully have spread itself in the world; certainly not with such wonderful rapidity. But I know not on what ground it is assumed that none but the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were conveyed by this rite. The ordinary influences of the Spirit were then equally necessary to the formation and display of the perfection of the Christian character; and those fruits of goodness which can be brought to maturity only by his power, were, in that age, produced in Christians in extraordinary perfection. And he who had been instrumental in conveying, more fre-

quently than any other of the Apostles, the Holy Ghost, informs us, that "to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of Spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." After Christianity became established, and the props of miraculous powers were unnecessary to its support, the ordinary and secret influences of the Spirit of God rose in the comparative estimate to the greater importance; and these are now essential requisites to the accomplishment of his gracious will concerning us in Christ Jesus. And can we doubt that he, who adapts the productions of the earth to the season, and the pleasures and dispositions of man to his age, will adapt the operation of the ordinances which he hath approved, to the necessities of those for whose benefit they were instituted. That the miraculous

powers of the Holy Ghost were not the only fruit of Confirmation, in the view of those who lived nearer to the age of Christian simplicity than ourselves; yea, that these powers were not to be expected when they were no longer needed, but more useful benefits sought, is evidently the decision of reason, and was the declaration of the most eminent of the ancient theologians. Does any man, says the celebrated St. Augustin, does any man now expect to hear them speak with new tongues, who receive imposition of hands as a mean to convey the Holy Spirit? Or when we laid our hand on these infants, did any of you expect that they should speak with tongues? And when they did not, were any of you so perverse in heart as to say they have not received the Holy Ghost? By the Holy Ghost, which is given only in the Catholic Church by imposition of hands, our forefathers would have us to understand what the Apostle says, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given us." Other gifts and graces than miraculous powers, may surely manifest the presence of God's Spirit with men; and why they may not be the fruits of an

observance of this ordinance, it will not be easy to say.

It may, however, be thought that this rite was efficacious only in the hands of the Apostles, who were so extraordinarily endowed, and was designed to be used only in their day. The passage of which the text is a part, is irreconcilable with this opinion. For if the doctrine of "laying on of hands" be a foundation in the fabric of the Christian religion, it must last as long as the religion itself; if it be a first principle of the doctrine of Christ, it can never cease, but must be received and found important to the latest day, by all who embrace the Gospel. They who lived near to the Apostles doubtless knew their sense of this matter. They did not suffer the rite to be laid aside. They assert, that it *descended* to the Church from the Apostles; and we find it in fact continued universally in the Church from their day to the period of the Reformation. It may be agreeable to you to hear some of the testimonies to this effect. Tertullian, writing upon baptism, says, after baptism succeeds "laying on of hands," by benediction, calling for and invoking the Holy Spi-

rit. Cyprian, speaking of the Confirmation of the Samaritan converts, says, "the same custom is now observed among us, that they who are baptized in the Church may be presented to the Governors of it, that by our prayer and imposition of hands they may obtain the Holy Ghost, and be perfected with the seal of Christ." Jerome demands, "are you ignorant that now this is the custom of the Churches upon those who have been baptized, afterwards to lay hands and thus invoke the Holy Spirit. Do you ask where it is written? In the Acts of the Apostles. Although if there were no authority of Scripture for it, the consent of the whole world in this particular has the force of a command." St. Augustin, writing upon the Trinity, observes, "the Apostles prayed that the Holy Spirit would come upon those on whom they laid their hands. They themselves did not give him. Which custom, after their example, deriving it from them, the Church observes to this day." St. Ambrose, commenting upon the words of my text, says, "it means the imposition of hands, by which the Holy Spirit is supposed to be received; which, after baptism,

is wont to be done by the chief priests, for the confirmation of men in the unity of the Church of Christ." We have parts of an office for the administration of Confirmation, which was used near fourteen hundred years ago; and it would be difficult to find, before the Reformation, a Church in which Confirmation was not retained. At the Reformation it was preserved by all the Protestant Churches, which kept the Episcopal office. The Lutheran Church, which did not hold that office essential, nevertheless retained Confirmation as of Apostolic origin, committing the administration of it to the priests; and in Calvin's Church, the Church of Geneva, which at first renounced it, it has been restored, and an office provided for the administration of it. To us it has come through a very ancient Church, which never was without it. And our Church, you know, hath set forth her excellent Catechism for the very purpose of preparing her children for this ordinance; and at baptism gives it in special charge to sponsors to take care that at a suitable time their wards receive it.

Now, concerning the authority of this rite, after the account which has been given of it,

it is not necessary for me to utter many words. There is an obligation upon all men to observe the institutions of the community to which they belong, that have been established by proper authority, and are of public utility; and this obligation has a peculiar force in the Church of Christ. For an ordinance of our religion which comes to us clothed with such venerable antiquity, nature, moreover, dictates that we manifest a sacred respect. But when we rise to the Apostolic age, and behold it provided for and practised by the twelve, we find it supported by the authority of God. Our Lord passed with his Apostles forty days after his resurrection, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." During this time he doubtless gave them many instructions how they were to proceed in all things which concerned his Church. The beloved disciple tells us, that very many things were spoken which are not recorded. They are not written, because they concerned those only to whom they were addressed. Enough is written, that we may believe, and "believing, may have life through his name." When about to leave them and return to his Father, he

moreover promised to send the Holy Ghost to them, that he might "bring all things to their remembrance," and "guide them into all truth." This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, and we may be sure that the things concerning doctrine, or government, or worship, which the Apostles established in the Church as of universal obligation, they established according to the instructions of their Mater, or by the inspiration of this Spirit of Truth. Whatever they placed in the foundations of Christianity, as they have "the laying on of hands," had divine approbation. Whatever they ranked among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, had the authority of God.

Could any thing add to the obligation of that which has the authority of God, there will be found, when we come to treat of the utility of this rite, some considerations which cannot fail to attract to it our regard. It will then be seen to have had its correspondent in the Jewish Church, and its analogy in the heathen world; to have been prefigured by the great visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, and to be commended to our ob-

servance by some instructive circumstances of the baptism of our blessed Lord. But, before we proceed to the propriety and utility of the rite, its import should have our attention. Of this it is proposed in the next place to treat.

2. Confirmation, you have seen, is the "laying on of hands," alluded to in the text. This rite was, indeed, anciently called the "laying on of hands." Confirmation is a name given it in later ages. But how came the ceremony of "laying on of hands" to be used in this business? What does it imply? Wherein consists its significance and value?

Let it be observed, that this is the most natural and ancient way of indicating the blessing of any person, and designation of him to any honour, trust, favour, and protection. Thus Jacob, when, with parental affection and prophetical authority, he would bestow a benediction upon the two sons of Joseph, and declare the favours and distinctions which awaited them, laid his hands upon their heads. Thus Moses, when he would impart to Joshua a portion of his honour according to God's command, did it by this

ceremony. "And Joshua," says the record, "was full of the Spirit of Wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him." Thus, when a part of the same Spirit which was in the great ruler of Israel, was to be taken by God, and put into the seventy elders who were to share with him his cares and honours, it was done, the Jewish writers tell us, by "laying on of hands." Moses, our master, saith Maimonides, created the seventy elders by imposition of hands, and the divine Majesty rested on them; and these elders imposed hands on others, and others on others. And they were found created unto the house of judgment, of Joshua and of Moses. Thus the Priests and Levites under the Jewish dispensation, extended their hands over the whole congregation, when they pronounced upon them the blessing of God. And thus our divine Master, the pattern of all that is wise and becoming in human conduct, when he would declare his good will towards the young children whom the people had brought unto him, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. This ceremony is, indeed, the natural expression of affectionate or authoritative benediction. The fa-

ther, the priest, the friend lifts his hands to heaven in supplication of a blessing, and then, causing them to descend and rest upon the head of the object for whom he supplicates, consigns him thereby to the enjoyment of the blessing sought, and certifies to him his faith that it will come upon him.

Now our heavenly Father deals with us as with men. He has graciously accommodated himself to our nature in all his transactions concerning our salvation. A religion without forms, proposing inward spiritual graces without any outward visible signs or expressions of them, would not be adapted to us in our present condition, if, indeed, such a religion would be suited to the condition of any created beings in the universe. Man has a body as well as a spirit; senses as well as a soul. And in nothing has God more commended his care and condescension to us, than in his regard to this constitution of our nature, in the revelation he has given us of our interests and duties. By outward signs he manifests and certifies, even to our senses, the wonders of his mercy; and these signs are taken from usages of our natural life, which furnish instructive analogies, and

are, in their spiritual application, both simple and impressive. The waters of baptism are but a visible representation and assurance of the cleansing of our nature from the guilt of original sin, through the mercies that are in Christ Jesus. In the Lord's Supper there is a sensible representation of the sacrifice by which our sins are taken away, and sensible pledges of the favour of God, and of our sustenance to everlasting life. Yea, the preaching of the Gospel is a representation, by artificial methods, of the truths it reveals; for words are but signs of the things expressed by them, fit and necessary to be used by beings to whom the ear is an avenue of knowledge, and speech an instrument for conveying it. And it is difficult to conceive why men may not be instructed by the hand as well as the tongue; why the gestures of the former, as well as the motions of the latter, may not be rendered by him who made them both significant of his mercy, and promotive of his praise. If there be any spiritual blessings which "laying on of hands" might happily signify or convey, there will be found, in the account which has been given of the

ancient and natural use of this ceremony, impressive reasons why the adoption of it by our heavenly Father, in expressing to us his mercies, would be very instructive and full of comfort. Let us see whether there are any such blessings.

What are the benefits which man seeks in recurring to the Gospel? They are all its merciful proffers; the pardon of sins; adoption anew into the favour of God; the promise of eternal life; but chiefly after he has been by baptism "regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church;" the protecting and strengthening, the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit. Reason, in the wisest of the heathens, taught them the necessity of divine assistance in the pursuit of goodness. The Scriptures tell us that we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing of ourselves; that our sufficiency is of God." The experience of every considerate man shows him, alas! the frailty of his nature when he is left to himself; his dependence for faith and holiness upon the help of God. The presence, indeed, and efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit, are that without which man sinks,

the victim of his infirmities, into ignorance and corruption, and spiritual death; and with which he rises in proportion to his measure of it, and the constancy of its operation, to a nearer and nearer resemblance to the God who created him. This important gift, with the other mercies of the Gospel, the Almighty covenants with Christians, when they are baptized, to bestow upon them; and no outward rite, more affecting, could he have approved "as a means whereby" to convey "the same;" no ceremony more significant can be imagined as "a pledge to assure us thereof," than the "laying on of hands." How naturally this ceremony may be applied to a use like this! how adapted to it, it is in the view of God himself, is impressively shown us in two occurrences upon sacred record. The first is an event in the life of Moses. When the glory of the Divine Nature was to pass this ancient servant of the Almighty, to protect and comfort him, lest he should be consumed in all his infirmities by the display of the face of God, we are told that he placed him first in the cleft of a rock, which may not unaptly represent baptism, whose waters were typi-

fied by the waters which flowed from the cleft of the rock which Moses smote; and afterwards, for his greater security, covered him with his hand while he passed by. The other is an occurrence in the life of the beloved disciple, on that interesting Lord's day which he passed in the isle of Patmos. There appeared to him "one like the Son of Man." "And when he saw him," overwhelmed, doubtless, by his greatness, and the consciousness of his own imperfections, he "fell at his feet as dead." And Jesus, for it was probably he, who had come to his disciple in exile, "laid his right hand upon him, saying unto him, Fear not." So natural and significant is it even with God, to express the bestowal of protection, benediction and favour, by the "laying on of hands." And what can man more earnestly desire than such a sensible benediction from his Father in heaven? How should the gift of the Holy Ghost be more suitably conveyed than by such an imposition of hands?

But what do I say? "Will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him?" And shall he appear in every instance

to certify to every man this his gift? To us, sinful beings, shall the God of Heaven come to lay on us, individually, his hands? Ah! beloved brethren, who could stand if he thus appeared? Before him the angels bow, and the archangels veil their faces. At his presence "the earth trembleth," and the "mountains quake" at his appearance. He looketh unto "the moon, and it shineth not, and the stars are not pure in his sight." His people hear his voice in Sinai, and they exclaim, "Let not God speak unto us, lest we die." Even Moses says, "I exceedingly fear and tremble." At the naked display of the face of our Creator, it is to be feared, we should, in this life, be consumed. We must wait till we have put off these simple bodies, and all the imperfections of this earthly state; we must wait till the Son, our Mediator, shall present us to the eternal glory of the Father, covering us even then with his own "right hand," before we can sustain the sight of Almighty God. "No man shall see me, and live."

How, then, shall our Father in heaven signify to us, and convey this inestimable gift? Should he send his angels on this er-

rand of love; should these "ministering spirits" of his kingdom descend in his behalf, to lay on us their hands, to assure us of his favour and help, there are evil consequences from which it would not be easy to secure our feeble nature. Man is prone to be led by his senses. The idolatry of the world shows how apt he is to offer his homage to the sensible sources of his benefits, to rest his spirit upon representations of the invisible God. Should angels bestow visibly upon every man, the benediction of the Almighty, there would be great danger that our admiration, and gratitude, and even our worship, would be confined to these glorious benefactors; and thus we might be led to render to creatures the honour which is due to the Being who hath declared himself "a jealous God," and suffers not his honour to be given with impunity to any other.

Yet that which the great King of Heaven does not descend to do himself to every person, he may do effectually by instruments and agents; and with wonderful condescension, he takes of the frail children of men, to minister among men in things pertaining to his kingdom. He hath appointed a Priest-

hood in his Church; and to those who successively are ordained to it, he hath committed "the ministry of reconciliation," the dispensing of his word and sacraments, and the performance, in his name, of all visible acts concerning your salvation. To them it appertains to seal to every Christian in baptism his participation of all the mercies revealed in Christ, and especially of the promise of the Holy Spirit; and when he comes of age to need more particularly this portion of his inheritance, by "laying on of hands," to certify him of God's favour and gracious goodness towards him; to signify and convey to him his strength and joy in the Holy Ghost. Not that in them there is any extraordinary virtue, Ah! no. To use the language of St. Paul, they, too, are men subject to like passions with yourselves. It is the office, brethren, and not the mortal man, that we would have in your view in all our holy functions. In taking from among men the agents whom he employs in the works of your salvation, God has graciously accommodated himself to the infirmities and convenience of your nature; wisely guarding you against the peril of having your attention

turned from him to any other beings as sources of your blessings. The "treasure" of Confirmation, as an inspired Apostle hath said of all the benefits of the Christian ministry, you "have in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

You see, then, that in the ordinance of "laying on of hands," they who minister therein, do, in God's behalf, by this significant act, confirm to Christians the mercies of the baptismal covenant; and more especially, as what they have then most need to receive and be assured of, his heavenly benediction, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, in the excellent office provided by our Church for the due administration of this rite, they first pray that the Almighty would "strengthen" those who are to receive it "with the Holy Ghost the Comforter; and daily increase in them his manifold gifts of grace:" and when they lay their hands severally upon the heads of the recipients, they do it, supplicating for each, that "God would defend them with his heavenly grace, that they may continue his for ever, and daily increase in his Holy Spirit more and

more, until they come unto his everlasting kingdom."

But the gift of this, and of all the mercies of the Gospel, is suspended by the Author of them upon certain conditions. Evident it is, in the nature of the thing, that they who desire and seek the Holy Spirit, must have repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ, and a sincere wish to walk in newness of life. And these qualifications are required by God, in Scripture, of all those who would be partakers of his salvation. While, therefore, in the ordinance of "laying on of hands" there is a confirmation to those who receive it, of the precious mercies which were obtained for them in baptism, and a fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, there is also by the recipients a profession of Christianity; a taking upon themselves the obligations of the Christian life; a confirmation, on their part, of the promises and vows which were made in their names when they were baptized. On this account it is, that the ministers of Confirmation, in the office provided for the administration of it, first demand of those who are to receive it, whether they "do, in the

presence of God and of the congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that they made, or that was made in their name, at their baptism; ratifying and confirming the same; and acknowledging themselves bound to believe and to do all those things which they then undertook, or their sponsors then undertook for them?" And to this inquiry they every one answer audibly, "I do." An answer, worthy to be pondered well before it is given; as upon the sincerity and intelligence with which it is given, much of the satisfaction must depend, which may be had in observing this ordinance.

It appears, then, that Confirmation is administered for the supply of the grace of God in a way adapted to the present condition of our nature. On the part of the recipients there is a profession of the Christian faith, by a public and formal ratification, in their own names, of the baptismal covenant; and an application for the help and benediction of God. God meets them by his minister, who, by the significant ceremony of "laying on of hands," confirms to them, on God's part, all the covenant of his mercies; assuring them especially of his Spirit and

benediction, to help them to "fight," under their Redeemer's banner, "the good fight of faith," and to attain "eternal life."

Not that they, to whom is committed the administration of this rite, have power to convey, arbitrarily, to whom they will, the graces of the Holy Spirit. God only gives. They are but instruments, by whom he acts. And while, as ministers, they give you his benediction, as men they need your prayers.

Neither are you to expect upon your reception of this rite, any sudden change in your nature, or extraordinary operation upon your spirits. For "so is the kingdom, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how: producing first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Our duty is to be in the use of the means of grace which God hath provided for us, and leave to him the accomplishment of his purposes. We may not immediately perceive, upon receiving Confirmation, any change in our knowledge or virtue. We may, after the reception of it, fall, perhaps, into transgression, and not be uniform in our

growth in grace. We may wonder, in the spirit of the Syrian leper, how, by the instrumentality of such unlikely means, the help of the Spirit of God should be communicated. But in those who, with right dispositions, observe this ordinance, and faithfully endeavour afterwards to fulfil its conditions, it is the part of faith to believe that he will cause its design to be accomplished in them who receive it, vanquishing by his power and goodness the obstacles to their salvation; and in us who administer it, "not having regard to our unworthiness, but to the purposes of mercy which he hath appointed us to serve."*

* Archbishop Secker.

SERMON II.

HEBREWS vi. 2.

The doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands.

IN discoursing from these words when they were first introduced to your consideration, it was proposed to set before you, in the first place, the antiquity and authority of *Confirmation;* secondly, its import; and, thirdly, the propriety and utility of it. Under the first head it has been shown, that Confirmation is the "laying on of hands" alluded to in the text, and, consequently, as ancient as the Apostles' days, from whom it has descended to the Church in every age since; and being reckoned by them among the first principles of the Gospel of Christ, must be considered as having the approbation and authority of God. In treating under the second head of the import of this rite, it appeared that Confirmation is administered for the supply of the grace of God in a way adapted to the present condition of our na-

ture; implying, on the part of the recipients, a profession of the Christian faith, by a public and formal ratification, in their own names, of the baptismal covenant, and an application for the help and benediction of God; and, on the part of God, a confirming to them, by the significant ceremony of "laying on of hands," all the covenant of his mercies, assuring them especially of his Spirit and benediction, to help them to "fight," under their Redeemer's banner, "the good fight of faith," and to attain "eternal life."

We are now to consider, in the last place, the propriety and utility of this ordinance.

In the first place, its utility is very great in bringing to our view the nature and obligations of our baptism. Ah! who hath pondered sufficiently the great things which were done for him when he was baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?" In that sacrament we were made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." It was the most momentous transaction which shall be done for us, individually, in this lower world. And yet how many Christians grow up and pass through

life without consciousness of these great behests! Though heirs, if they will be so, of immortality and bliss in heavenly regions, they live as if their only inheritance was the few short years they pass upon this earth, and the unsatisfying pursuits and fleeting pleasures in which they spend them. Though made by baptism "little lower than the angels" in their endowments and relations, they choose their portion, and expend their lives, as if God had made them little higher than the brutes. This often proceeds, in all probability, from their not taking sufficiently impressive views of what was done for them when they were baptized. They are unacquainted with the greatness of their vocation, with the treasures which belong to them, with the glories which are within their reach. Confirmation brings baptism to their notice. It engages their attention to the great things which God hath done for them, whereof they should be glad; and the solemn things he requires of them, whereof they should be mindful; and thus is calculated to make them early acquainted with their privileges and duties as Christians, of which, without this rite to point to the waters in

which they were washed, and the mercies which have been sealed to them, they might pass through many stages of life, and even descend into the grave, with vague apprehensions, or in utter ignorance. But of such an ignorance, the consequences in the world to come may be eternally lamented. Even in this world it subjects men to the greatest privations in their most important concerns. Without a knowledge of the value of their baptism, they must be destitute of the true spring of Christian exertion, and the highest source of human joy. Their life will want the Christian character, their happiness the Christian foundation, their devotion the Christian spirit. They cannot, with understanding, apply to themselves the grateful strain in which the Psalmist describes the condition of the redeemed; "he brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay, and set my feet upon the rock, and ordered my goings;" nor join in spirit and in truth with the Church, in her hymn to the Author of her salvation, "Day by day we magnify thee, and we worship thy name ever world without end."

Again, this rite is very proper and useful

in affording young persons an opportunity to make, publicly, a profession of the Christian religion. So becoming and desirable, so reasonable and beneficial is such a profession, that nature dictated a correspondent practice in the most cultivated nations of the heathen world. In Persia, their youths were required, when they came to man's estate, to take a solemn oath that they would despise all filthy lucre, bodily pleasure, and vain glory; that they would be emulous of virtue, worship God, and honour their parents; that they would speak truth, do good, and never wilfully violate any of these things. Among the Athenians, when their young men were enrolled, according to the usage of their nation, they bound themselves, by a solemn obligation, to observe the perpetual solemnities and received customs of their country, and to defend and reverence the religion in which they were born.

What appeared so proper to enlightened reason, seems also to have had the sanction of divine approbation. Among the Jews, that people so highly favoured and so fully instructed of God, we find a similar practice. "When the Jewish children came to be

thirteen years of age, and had learnt the law and their prayers, they were presented by their father before a holy assembly, and there solemnly took upon themselves the observation of the law, and were thenceforth to answer for their own faults. All which was concluded with prayer for their increase in good works." To this custom our blessed Lord, who for our example was careful "to fulfil all righteousness," is supposed to have submitted himself, when at twelve years of age, having, by his rare attainments, according to a Jewish phrase, run before the command, he was found at Jerusalem, "in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions." And did the youthful Jew study assiduously the shadowy religion and voluminous law of his fathers, and rejoice publicly to take upon himself that yoke which it was so laborious and painful to bear? Yea, did the heathens, by a formal act, profess the dark, unsatisfying religions of their country, and promise to reverence and defend them? And shall Christians not openly avow their attachment to the religion which bringeth unto them salvation, and sheds a clear and benign light upon all the paths of

life? Shall they, to whom the Son of God has come to instruct them, who have been redeemed by his blood, and are taught the way to eternal life by the words of his mouth; shall they neglect to choose him for their Lord, and to devote themselves openly to his service? In them who have been baptized, it is not only reasonable and becoming to do so—it is required of them. They owe it to the Church who applied to them, in their infancy, the benefits of the baptismal covenant, in the confident belief that when they grew up they would acknowledge its obligations. They owe it to their sponsors, who, when they were unable to act for themselves, charitably took upon them these obligations in their names, in the just expectation that "when they came of age they would take them upon themselves." They owe it to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who demands that all men should enlist openly under the banners of the Christ, and not be ashamed of him before men, if they would partake of his triumphs over sin and death, and not have him ashamed of them, when he "shall come in the glory of the Father, and all the holy angels with him."

"The righteousness which is of faith," "what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It was probably to some such act by the excellent Timothy that St. Paul alludes, when he reminds him with such powerful effect, in his first Epistle to him, that he had "professed a good profession before many witnesses;" and among the advantages of Confirmation it is not the least, that it affords a suitable, and, to the young, a very seasonable opportunity of publicly declaring their faith in, and devotedness to, the religion in which they were baptized; the religion of their fathers; the religion of the Redeemer, who alone hath "the words of eternal life;" the religion by which, if at all, mankind must be reformed, and saved, and made happy; and to the knowledge of which it is a distinguishing mercy that God hath vouchsafed to call

them. Happy state of the Christian world, if all its offspring, its sons, and its daughters, were seen at their entrance upon the career of active life making this profession.

For, I add, in the third place, that it is highly useful, at the period when men's habits are beginning to be formed, to have their minds and hearts prepossessed by the instructions of religion. Man is a religious being; his interests and destinies are not confined to this present world; he is to exist through eternity. Yet the things of this life seize fast upon his attention, and have a powerful influence upon his passions and conduct. He passes the first years of his existence in a state in which there is every thing to mislead his opinions and endanger his virtue.

The world is infectious. Few bring back at eve immaculate the manners of the morn. Ah! how many thoughts become rooted in the mind; how many habits are given to the affections; how many biases are put upon the conduct, in the years of youth, which it is the most painful labour, the most difficult duty of the Christian, in after life, to correct or destroy. These evils proceed from want of better knowledge or holier impressions.

They would hardly find place if the ground in which they appear were occupied with plants of religious setting, and warmed with the light of celestial wisdom, and watered with the dews of heaven; at least they would not strike their roots so deep, and have so strong a growth, as to become so difficult to guide, so hard to extirpate. Confirmation calls the attention to religion: it sets before the youthful mind what God hath forbidden as evil; what he has revealed as true, and of highest importance to them; and what he hath enjoined as good: it excites inquiry; inquiry begets knowledge; knowledge obtained and professed under such solemn auspices can hardly fail to produce an increase of piety; and thus there is placed early in the hearts of the young a light by which they may discern the character and tendency of their desires; thus they are furnished with defence, as far as knowledge will go, against the errors and immoralities to which they cannot but be exposed, by the corruption of their sinful nature, and the pollutions which are in the world.

Once more; the comfort and encouragement, the peace and animation, afforded by

this rite, are evidences of its utility. To be assured that a thing is attainable is a powerful incentive to pursuit. To have success guarantied to us is the greatest encouragement to exertion. How animating is it, when undertaking a difficult work, to have the good wishes of our friends, the benediction of our parents, and assurance of the prayers and assistance of those who are able to help us. The course of virtue is an arduous one. The objects which the Christian pursues are great and glorious; but between him and the attainment of them, there are distance, and many obstacles. *Confirmation* brings to him all those encouragements. It assures him that eternal life is attainable by him, and guaranties the attainment of it to his faithful pursuit, with the oath of God. It gives him the benediction of his heavenly Father, and the good wishes of all the blessed Trinity in his undertaking; and promises the help of one who is mighty to save. In it the Almighty says to him in effect, at his entrance upon the service to which he is called, "my presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." At any stage of his journeying, he may look back to this co-

venant and benediction, and if he have endeavoured to observe his vows, "though an host should encamp against him, his heart need not fear; though" spiritual "war should rise up against him, in them should he be confident." If he be ready to say of his adversaries, the evil passions of his heart and the "crafts and assaults of the devil," the temptations and sorrows of life, and the terrors of death, these enemies are greater and mightier than I, how shall I dispossess them? the voice of the Almighty may be heard in this rite, saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." As in any undertaking, so in the outset of the Christian life nothing can be more valuable than the knowledge of the favour and benediction of the Most High. He cheerfully pursues his object who knows that the Almighty is his helper and friend in the pursuit. This is especially the case in approaching the Lord's Supper. As on the one hand it is proper, that before Christians partake of that heavenly food, they should submit to the order and rules of the family for whose sustenance and refreshment that food is provided; so, on the other hand, it

is very desirable that a portion of that Spirit which actuates the family should be transfused unto their bosoms, and they be assured of their welcome, by being certified of their participation in that favour which the great Head of the family extends to all the household. The usefulness and propriety of this rite, in preparing Christians to go to the holy table with those indispensable requisites, a full trust in God's mercy, and a quiet conscience, are so great, that the Church has seen fit to order, that "there shall none be admitted to the Holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." This instance of the utility of this ordinance, whether it be considered with respect to the good order and reputation of the Church, or to the peace and comfort of the Christian, at that trying and timid period of his life, when he is about to perform, for the first time, his highest and most solemn duty, it is not possible to estimate too highly.

But what is knowledge, what is animation, without strength! It is a difficult warfare in which the Christian is engaged. It is not enough that he has been enlisted to "fight

manfully under the banner of the Redeemer;" he must be furnished with arms and strength for the contest. It is not enough that he have been separated and devoted in baptism to the service of his Lord; he needs the Holy Spirit, of whose union with him *Confirmation* is the sign and means to strengthen and protect, to help and defend him. And the utility of this ordinance is in no respect greater than in furnishing you with the weapons of your warfare, at a time when your enemies are most numerous, your danger greatest, and your own strength least tried and immature. This utility of the rite was prefigured in the case of the Apostles. They had been called to be his disciples by our Lord himself; they had professed faith, and repentance, and devotion to their Master; they had partaken of the symbols of his body and blood, at the first celebration of his Holy Supper; he had said unto them, "he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit, and ye are clean." "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." Yet were they "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had written." Their understand-

ings were dull in apprehending the plan of salvation which their Master was accomplishing. They were ambitious and emulous; and when Jesus fell into the hands of his enemies, they all "forsook him and fled." Their Master knew their need of the Comforter to open their understandings and "abide with them for ever;" and he instructed them not to go forth to their Christian work till they were "endued with power from on high." On the day of Pentecost they received their large portions of this gift, which, having ascended up on high, their Lord had received for men; and, behold, they who before understood none of his sayings, now comprehended clearly the great doctrines of his salvation; they who were timid and perplexed, became courageous and happy in his cause; exhibiting, through the aid of the Spirit, not only miraculous deeds, but such attainments also of faith and holiness, as have been adduced, and with great power, as evidences of the divine origin of the religion which they embraced. Let me turn your attention to a higher example:—It is that of our blessed Lord himself. Worthy to be remembered by all his disciples is the

fact, that he entered not upon the labours and trials of his life, and especially that he went not forth to the temptation, to which, for the full triumph of our nature over the devil, and for the instruction of us all, he condescended to submit himself, till he had been baptized, and had received, after his baptism, the Holy Ghost; which, when he had come from the water, and was praying on the shore, "descended upon him like a dove;" visibly, for the satisfaction of others; really, for his own *Confirmation*, in his human nature. Herein, in the opinion of some ancient fathers, was represented to us "the doctrine of baptisms, and laying on of hands." "When he was washed by the hands of John," says one of them, "the order of the mystery was settled." The Father fulfilled what the Son had asked, and what the Holy Ghost had foretold. The spiritual oil immediately descended in the image of a dove, and sate upon his head, and anointed him, from whence he began to be called Christ, because he was anointed of God the Father. And that imposition of hands might not seem to be wanting, the voice of God was heard from the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved

Son, in whom I am well pleased." And, blessed Lord, if thou wentest not into the wilderness to thy conflicts with the enemy, and to the sufferings of thy unparalleled life, till thou wast fortified with the Spirit, what are we "to fight our fight, to finish our course, to keep the faith," without the Holy Ghost! Happy, surely, are the youths upon whom, at the period when their passions are strong, the allurement to pleasure enticing, and all the devious paths of life opening before them, thou vouchsafest to bestow the restraining and protecting, the strengthening and consoling influences of the Spirit, the Comforter. "It was expedient for us that thou shouldest go away," that thou mightest "send him unto us." And useful to the young Christian, yea, to all men, is the rite of thy Church, by which thou assurest them, if they perform their vows, of their participation of this important part of thy Father's favour and gracious goodness towards thy people.

Again; this ordinance of the Church is useful to remove the objections which many persons have to the charitable office of sponsors, and to facilitate the discharge of the

sponsors' duties. It is, indeed, an office of great responsibility. In general its duties are too heedlessly assumed, too negligently performed. Sponsors, whose wards are no more in this life, are they reaping in the other world fruits of your care? Are they bearing testimony before the throne of God to your pious fidelity? Sponsors, whose wards are living, and ye who shall hereafter be called upon to appear as sponsors, let the prospect of frequent opportunities of fulfilling the charge which is given you at the close of the baptismal office, invite and animate you to a faithful attention to the duties you owe to those little ones, whom you took at the altar from the arms of Christ's ministers, and bring them up for his kingdom. Do you say it is a difficult work? and are any deterred on account of the responsibility from undertaking this most kind, and, in the ancient Church, most useful office? Where *Confirmation* is statedly administered, it will be for a shorter time, yea, only for the years in which the wards cannot act for themselves, that the obligations will rest upon you. Of the bodies of the helpless infants, for whom there were in reserve large estates, great

honours, and high destinies, would any of you refuse to take care, for a few years, till they might enter upon their possessions? How much rather, then, of the souls of the little ones, for years as few; whose destinies are immortality; whose inheritance, if they are fitted for it, is the kingdom of heaven. Surely, the magnitude of the interests of children which are involved in the discharge of a sponsor's duties, and the prospect of being under the responsibility only for those years in which the young are not of age to take care of their own souls, will diminish the aversion of Christians to sustain this important office, and increase their anxiety to discharge its obligations. And this leads to mention, as another benefit which this rite is calculated to promote, the diligent use of that valuable means of religious instruction—the catechising of children. In the Catechism of the Church, they must be sufficiently instructed before they are brought to be *confirmed*. For the purpose of preparing them for *Confirmation*, this incomparable compend of Christian instruction is said to be set forth. And the young who are taught to understand, as well as repeat it, cannot

be ignorant of any of the essential principles of our holy religion. The expected returns, at stated times, of opportunities to bring the young to be *confirmed*, will, it may be hoped, excite and encourage ministers, and sponsors, and parents, to a full and faithful use of this excellent means of promoting the knowledge and virtues of the rising generation; and will also, by presenting an object of importance to their mind, engage the young more intensely and assiduously in this instruction. Of the importance of this influence of the rite, it is impossible to give a full expression. "Whom," says the prophet, "shall he teach wisdom, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?"

Further, this ordinance is eminently calculated to promote the comfort and edification of the Church. The soundness of her faith will be most likely to be preserved when her young members, as they advance to her highest privileges, are well instructed therein; and all professing the same principles, promise to be its supporters. By gathering them together, in their earlier years,

under the same wing of the Almighty, unity of Spirit may happily be promoted, and the bond of peace and charity strengthened. More of the Redeemer's family, it may be expected, will be induced by this ordinance to go to his table with a full trust in God's mercy, and a quiet conscience; and while the good order and reputation of the Church will be promoted by the satisfactory evidence which will be hereby obtained, of the sufficiency of their knowledge and good intentions, who are received to her holy communion; they who are about to sit down, for the first time, at the sacrament of the supper, will, at this timid and anxious period of the Christian's life, be encouraged and strengthened by the previous reception of God's benediction and grace. The Pastors of the Church will be comforted when they behold those whom they themselves, or their predecessors, baptized when they were infants, taking, with competent knowledge and devout intentions, their privileges, and their duties upon themselves. Those who have long been guests at the sacred board will have a holy consolation, when they see young communicants rising, many of them from

among their own children, in successive grades, to take their places at the table of the Lord, when they shall be called to his table in heaven. They that are without, will observe with admiration in the Church, what the good Psalmist so earnestly desired to have seen in the Church to which he belonged—its "sons growing up as the young plants, and its daughters being as the polished corners of the temple." The efforts of the elder to prepare the younger for this ordinance, by instructing them in the Gospel; and the readiness of the younger to devote themselves in it to the honour and obedience of God, would, in all probability, bring down upon the community, larger portions of the blessing of heaven; and in the Churches in which many were found thus walking in the fear of the Lord, and comfort of the Holy Ghost, it could hardly fail but that there should be a goodly increase of Christian knowledge, piety, and virtue. Upon this point I have the testimony of the Bishops of our Church, in those parts of it in which it is most flourishing—that they have found nothing more useful in promoting its growth and prosperity, than the administration of

this rite. It is, indeed, a remarkable testimony to the utility of *Confirmation*, that when the Ministry and Liturgy of the Church from which we have received it, were, in a time of unhappy ferment, abolished, many of those who succeeded to places without the office of those who were removed, took upon them the administration of this ordinance.

I add, lastly, that this rite is reasonable and proper, as a becoming service to God. He has a claim to the first devotion of our hearts. Right and becoming it is, before we enter on the world, to acknowledge him. And especially when we have been made his children by adoption and grace, he may expect us to seek his help and benediction, that we may glorify him with our bodies and with our spirits, which are his. We may believe that this service is pleasant and acceptable to God; that our Father in heaven is happy when we seek his spirit in favour. For what man is there among you who is not gratified when his children come to him asking his blessing, and desiring his direction and aid, that they may do him good and honourable service? If ye, then, are gra-

tified by the devotion of your offspring, is he who implanted the paternal affections in your bosom less affectionate to his children than you? Of his readiness to bestow the blessings which are sought in this rite, he hath given us assurance, and affecting illustration, in this beautiful appeal, by the mouth of his Son: "What man is there among you, who, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give" the Holy Spirit "to them that ask it?" to them that ask it when they are setting out on their journey through this perilous world? to them that ask it at his altar, in "the place which he hath chosen to put his name there?" to them that ask it with an unreserved devotion of themselves to his service and glory? to them that ask it in union with his ministers and "the congregation of the saints?" to them that "ask it in his Son's name," at the moment when they are *confirming* their enlistment under his Son's banner, to fight against the enemies, whom he would have them overcome? If there be

upon earth a scene upon which "the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity," looks down with pleasure, he surely does upon the companies of the young, when they are gathered together to place themselves obediently under the shadow of his wings, anxious to be defended by him from every thing which is displeasing to him; and looking to him, meekly, for assistance, that they may be enabled to do his will, and become fitted for that heaven which he wishes them to enjoy. As he beholds them in their adoption and devotion of themselves to his service, I doubt not, to use a sentiment of one of the most learned and pious divines of the English Church, "he says of each of them, in a proportionate degree, as he said of Jesus at the moment when the Spirit like a dove descended on him, This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased."

ADDRESS

DELIVERED IMMEDIATELY AFTER ADMINISTERING THE HOLY AND APOSTOLICAL RITE OF CONFIRMATION.

My young Friends,

THERE will be few occasions in the course of your lives so interesting and important as the present one. You have this day devoted yourselves to the most high God, your Redeemer; and he hath confirmed to you the assurance that you are his adopted children, and heirs of his kingdom. It is to you the day of your entrance upon that great and glorious estate, of which your parents and sponsors were permitted to take possession for you, when you were yet in your infancy; an estate containing the pardon of your sins, the favour and affection of Almighty God, the assistance of his grace and Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life; and, therefore, very fitly denominated "a state of salvation." At this, your entrance upon the possession of it in your own names, the

Church rejoices; the angels of heaven have been spectators, and are glad; the blessed Redeemer of our race receives gratification, and takes you by the hand; and the Almighty Father of all beings condescends to bestow on you his heavenly benediction. So great is the import of what has now been done, that you, as you rest upon it, and we, as we contemplate it, should be penetrated with admiration and gratitude, with humility and joy; and might well exclaim—"What hath God wrought!"

This transaction, however, is not a mere ceremony, which is now done, and is to have no connexion with your future couduct. It ought to consecrate your whole life, to give direction to all the steps of it; never to be forgotten at any of its stages, nor remembered but with thankfulness and godly fear. You have taken upon you the vows of God. The relations into which you are brought are to be perpetual. You have acknowledged obligations which are to be performed daily. There is a covenant between you and the Almighty, in which you have promised to believe, and to be holy. In virtue of this covenant there is opened to you the

prospect of the highest felicity of which your nature is capable—even satisfaction in life, peace in death, and immortality in heaven. But your attainment of these blessings depends upon the fulfilment, by the covenanting parties in the transaction of this day, of their respective engagements.

Touching the Almighty, what he hath promised he "will most surely keep and perform." He hath graciously condescended to renew to you, in your Confirmation, the assurance of the pardon of your sins, of the aid of his Holy Spirit, and of eternal life. Respecting the certainty and manner of accomplishing these things, it becomes you not to scruple or to doubt. In this matter your business is to believe, with a steadfast reliance on his word, that if you are faithful to fulfil your vows, "he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it" unto the end; "for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance;" "with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The power of your God is equal to his purposes. His veracity is equal to his power. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

He hath commanded to bless, and you are blessed ;" and, unless you abandon the conditions of the blessing, nothing can "reverse it."

It is, therefore, respecting the fulfilment of the engagements on your part made, that you are to be always concerned, so long as you continue in this lower world. You have promised to the most high God, your Redeemer and best Benefactor, to renounce whatever he has forbidden, to believe whatever he has taught, and to do whatever he has commanded. As you look forward into this path which you have entered, does it seem to you an arduous way ? It is an arduous way. For man to be good and gain heaven, is not a light business. But how great, how encouraging, how animating are your excitements to fidelity ? If you persevere, the Holy Ghost will remain with you ; you will have in life the favour of God, the knowledge of forgiveness, and the consciousness of holiness ; he who died for you will see, with satisfaction, the fruit of his love ; your parents and friends will be gladdened, and society adorned and refreshed by the beauty and fragrance of your virtues. When

death shall approach, (for you all must die,) to convey you from all you here hold dear, to the tribunal of the Almighty, you will have the only hopes by which man can be comforted and sustained in that most awful hour of human probation; and from the tribunal of judgment you will be taken to heaven, there to be happy for ever with all the good, with Jesus, and with God. If, on the other hand, you become weary of the path, and desert it for any of the enticements of "the world, the flesh, or the devil," your portion will be perplexity and dissatisfaction in life; cheerlessness, if not horror, in death; and everlasting banishment from heaven, into regions of darkness and undiscovered woe. What powerful motives are found in this alternative, to the most careful and constant performance of your Christian duties? What inducements to keep your souls diligently, to pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, to endeavour to be righteous before God, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless?"

Study, then, my young friends, the holy Scriptures. They are given by your hea-

venly Father, to be a "light to your feet, and a lamp to your path;" study, then, some portion of them every day, that you may regulate all the conduct of your lives by them, for they contain for you the only certain instructions: in them we have the words of "eternal life, and they are they which testify of our Lord." Use yourselves to ask daily in private prayer, and to seek, by a devout attendance on the services of the sanctuary, the continuance and increase of God's Holy Spirit. It is promised to you, if you will seek it and use it faithfully; and without it you can do nothing. Remember your obligation to respect yourselves, and to abstain from all sin and wickedness, considering "that your are the temples of God; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." As soon as you can, with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience, go to the holy table, to celebrate the Lord's Supper; and never neglect, in the course of your lives, to attend, with the suitable preparation and dispositions, on this most comfortable ordinance. It is in this sacrament you must find the food which, from time to time, will refresh and sustain your spiritual

life; and the medicine, frequently, which will heal your sickness. To these helps, from the mercy of God, fail not to add the exertions of your own reason, and of all your faculties, to be faithful and virtuous in all the stations and relations of life, to which, in his Providence, he shall call you. Cultivate, in yourselves especially, that benevolence, that readiness and desire to do good, which is so conspicuous a part of Christian virtue, and which, we have reason to believe, it is particularly pleasant to our heavenly Father to behold in his children. Meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ, the pattern of all that is perfect in man; and endeavour, by the assistance of that grace which you have received, to be made like unto him. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," as become you as his followers, "think on these things." Thus will you be rendered as perfect and happy as man in this region of imperfection and sorrow can be; the way which seemed arduous will be found by you, as you advance,

to be the "way of pleasantness;" and the path which you have chosen, to be the "path of peace." While all other ways lead down to the gates of hell, it will conduct you, at last, to the inheritance in heaven. But if you at any time quit it, Oh! what shall I say unto you? Repent immediately, and return to it, that so iniquity may not be your ruin. In dismissing you, to run your career upon which you have entered, I cannot but be filled with solicitude; and the same words which the wise king of Israel addressed to his son, I now leave with you; "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

Christians of greater advancement who have received *Confirmation*, pleasant it must be to you to behold these young persons on the same ground with you, starting in the same course which you have for some time pursued; and you have done well in coming to this rite, to animate them by your example, and to manifest your own desire to "fulfil

all righteousness." Instructed already in the mercies of the Christian covenant, and accustomed, at your communions, to recognize its obligations, it is not needful for me to address to you many words. But there is an admonition of Moses to God's ancient people, so pertinent to your case, and to the case of all who are associated with us in this holy rite, that I cannot forbear to bring it to your notice, and with it will close this Address. "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken."

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Delsor Rt. Rev. Theodore DD.

On Confirmation

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